

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached sheets 1 and 2 of drawings replace the original sheet of drawings and include new FIG. 4.

New sheet 1 includes FIGS. 1 and 2, while FIG. 3, originally grouped with FIGS. 1 and 2 in a single sheet, has now been moved to sheet 2. The font of the reference characters of FIGS. 1-3 has been changed to maintain consistency with the font of new FIG. 4.

REMARKS

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 1-3, 8, 10, 13, 16, and 21-24 are pending in this application.

Claims 1-3, 8 and 21 have been rejected as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,120,534 to Ruiz ("*Ruiz*") in view of European Patent No. 0 779 062 to Glastra et al. ("*Glastra*").

Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 16, and 23-24 have been rejected as obvious over *Glastra* in view of German Patent No. 195 09 464 to Jäger ("*Jäger*").

Claim 10 has been rejected as obvious over *Glastra* in view of *Jäger* and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,695,498 to Tower ("*Tower*").

Claim 22 has been rejected as obvious over *Glastra* in view of *Jäger* and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,843,116 to Crocker ("*Crocker*").

Response to the Office Action

Claims 1-3, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 21-24 are pending in the application. Claim 1 has been amended to import the limitations of claim 13, and claim 13 has been canceled. Therefore, upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1-3, 8, 10, 16 and 21-24 will be subject to examination.

The Examiner's rejection of the pending claims are based on alleged obviousness in view of the cited references. A prima facie case of obviousness requires: (1) a reason to combine; (2) a reasonable expectation of success; and (3) a teaching or suggestion of all claim limitations in the prior art. *Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp. v. Philip Morris*, 229 F.3d 1333, 1342 (Fed. Cir. 2003); *In re Regal*, 526 F.2d 1399, 1403 (C.C.P.A. 1975).

The rejection of independent claim 1 of and the claims depending thereon is respectfully traversed at least for the reasons detailed in the following sections.

A. The Rejection of Claims 1-3, 8 and 21 over *Ruiz* in view of *Glastra*

The rejection of claims 1-3, 8 and 21 over *Ruiz* in view of *Glastra* is traversed because *Ruiz* and *Glastra*, alone or in combination, do not teach all the elements of independent claim 1 and of the claims depending therefrom, and because there is no reason for a person skilled in the art to combine the cited references, indicating that the Examiner's rejection is based on

impermissible hindsight.

Ruiz teaches a stent with a ring-like section of reduced diameter obtained by expanding two balloons at opposite ends of the stent. Therefore, *Ruiz* does not teach expansion with a single balloon, as the Examiner has admitted. *Glastra* instead teaches stent expansion with a single balloon, but does not teach using a balloon having a stiffening element. Therefore, the combination of *Ruiz* and *Glastra* do not teach all the limitations of independent claim 1 or of the claims depending therefrom.

Applicant also notes that *Ruiz* expressly requires that stent expansion be performed with two opposing balloons, contrary to the teachings of *Glastra*, which had been published before *Ruiz*. Therefore, *Ruiz* elected not to employ the expansion method of *Glastra*.

Applicant further notes that one of the problems solved by Applicant's invention is blood turbulence as blood exits the stent section of reduced diameter (see, e.g. paragraph [0008] of the published specification), while the design of *Ruiz*, lobed and with sharply changing cross-section, is prone to turbulence. *Glastra*, on the other hand, teaches to a stent that supports a vessel in the proximity of a tumor, and is not concerned with blood turbulence, which is not even mentioned by *Glastra*. Therefore, there is no reason why a person of ordinary skill in the art would have removed a main design element of *Ruiz* (which was developed after *Glastra*) and introduced in its place a design feature of *Glastra*, when neither reference – particularly *Glastra* – addresses blood turbulence. For the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that the proposed combination of *Ruiz* and *Glastra*, even if such a combination were possible, can be based only on impermissible hindsight by the Examiner.

B. The Rejection of Claims 1-3, 8, 13, 16, and 23-24 over *Glastra* in view of *Jäger*

The rejection of claims 1-3, 8, 13, 16, and 23-24 over *Ruiz* in view of *Glastra* is respectfully traversed because *Ruiz* and *Glastra*, alone or in combination, do not teach all the elements of independent claim 1 and of the claims depending therefrom

Glastra has been discussed above. The Examiner has admitted that *Glastra* does not teach the use of a stiffening element to form the essentially tubular segment of reduced expandability. The Examiner has characterized *Jäger* as teaching a stiffening element for forming a reduced expandable section. *Jäger*, however, teaches that “Die Einshnürung 5 kann beispielweise von einem eng um den Schlauch gewickelten Draht oder einer Federklammer

fixiert sein,” which Applicant understands to mean that “the chokepoint 5 can for example be stabilized by a wire wound around the chokepoint 5 or by a spring clip.” Therefore, *Jäger* does not teach the forming of the stent by stabilizing the central portion of the balloon, but by pre-stabilizing the central portion of the stent. In fact, Applicant could find no reference to expansion balloons in *Jäger*.

Applicant notes that such a deficiency in *Jäger* had been discussed in the response to the Office Action of November 11, 2006 and has not been rebutted by the Examiner.

Based on the foregoing, independent claim 1 is not amended either in view of the combinations of *Ruiz* and *Glastra*, or of *Glastra* and *Jäger*. Therefore, none of the claims depending from claim 1, including claims 10 and 22, are obvious in view of the cited references.

C. Response to the Advisory Action

In the Advisory Action dated August 16, 2007, the Examiner has remarked that:

1. The amendments to claim 1 presented on August 6, 2007 and not entered by the Examiner did not necessarily exclude the use of the stent itself as a stiffening element;
2. The original drawings did not clearly indicate that the stiffening element was not the stent itself.

Consequently, Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite that the stiffening element is “independent of the spent.” Support for such language can be found, for example, in paragraph [0011] of the published application.

Applicant has also amended the drawings to add a FIG. 4 that shows that the stiffening element is not the stent. New language has been added to the specification to introduce and explain the new FIG. 4.

Conclusion

The present patent application has been the subject of a number of office actions and of two requests for continued examination. Applicant believes that all points raised by the Examiner during prosecution have been fully addressed. In particular, the Examiner has raised two objection in the Advisory Action of August 16, 2007 with respect to the last, non-entered amendment that have been fully addressed in the present amendment.

Based on the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. The timely issue of a notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,

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